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ADDRESS

OF

Col. Charles Marshall,

(Formerly Private Secretary and A. D. C. to General Robert E. Lee),

OF BALTIMORE,

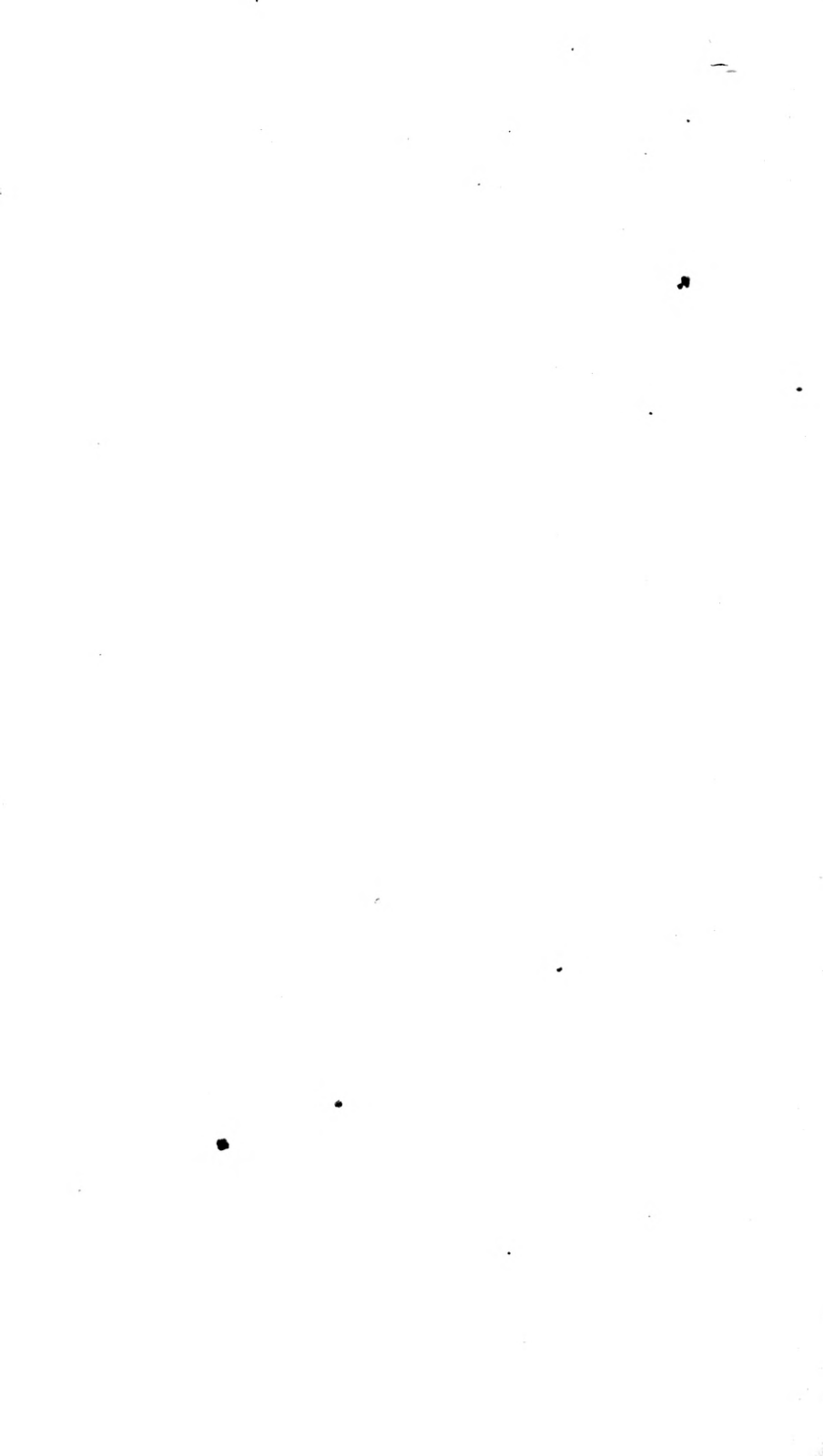
BEFORE THE

Va. Division of the Army of Northern Virginia,

At their Annual Meeting, held at the Capitol in  
Richmond, Va., October 29, 1874.

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GARY'S STEAM PRINTING HOUSE.  
1875.





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Published by order of the Virginia Division of the Army of Northern Virginia.

FITZHUGH LEE, *President.*

GEORGE L. CHRISTIAN, *Secretary.*

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## ADDRESS.



*Mr. President and Fellow Soldiers of the Army of Northern Virginia:*

When the Executive Committee honored me with the invitation that brings me before you to-night, I was at a loss to choose from the teeming annals of the Army of Northern Virginia a subject appropriate to the occasion, and one that my information would enable me to present without trespassing too much upon your patience.

The short history of that Army is crowded with events and incidents which will furnish material to the historian, the orator, the poet and the painter as long as heroic courage, uncomplaining endurance, magnanimity in the hour of victory, and fortitude under adverse fortune, continue to command the admiration and attract the sympathy of mankind.

But I do not feel at liberty to choose at will from those incidents, nor can I venture to utter the thoughts that start first to my mind as I look upon the faces of old comrades in arms, and upon some young faces that remind me of comrades who have passed away. I dare not trust myself to speak to you of those memories of our army life, dearest to the heart of a soldier, but which make no part of the world's history of war. Time does not permit me to attempt a description of any of the great battles in which you bore an honorable part, nor would such a description, however accurate, as well illustrate the magnitude of the service performed by the Army of Northern Virginia, or afford as clear a view of the difficulties against which it had to contend, and of the burden imposed upon its courage and endurance, as will be derived from the subject to which I propose to invite your attention, if I can succeed in presenting that subject properly. Indeed, it requires no little courage to undertake to fight any of the battles of the war "o'er again."

It has been sixty years since Waterloo, and to this day writers are not agreed as to the facts of that famous battle.

English historians claim that the steadfast lines of the Iron Duke turned the scale of victory, while the Germans, with equal confidence, assert that the glory is due to him for whose coming Wellington is said

to have prayed, as he watched the dubious tide of battle. Victor Hugo, with all the light of history before him, has amused every man who ever saw a battle with his description of the field that decided the fortune of Napoleon and of Europe.

It is not fourteen years since our war began, and yet, who on either side of those who took part in it is bold enough to say that he knows the exact truth, and the whole truth, with reference to any of the great battles in which the armies of the North and South met each other?

Was not Mr. Sumner censured by the Legislature of Massachusetts because, prompted in part at least, let us hope, by the love of truth, he renewed in the Senate of the United States after the war a resolution which in substance he had previously brought forward?

*Resolved.* That \* \* \* \* \* it is inexpedient that the names of *victories* obtained over our own fellow citizens should be placed on the regimental colors of the United States."

This resolution would erase from the colors of the United States army such names as those of Cold Harbor, Manassas, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, which you have seen inscribed upon captured flags. Now we believe that *we* won those fights, and we wonder why a resolution of Congress should be necessary to blot them from the list of Union victories recorded on the standards of its armies.

We think that we know something about the second battle at Manassas, and yet is not General Fitz John Porter, who fought us so stubbornly at the first battle of Cold Harbor, now in disgrace, because it was proved to the satisfaction of a Federal court-martial that half the Confederate army was not where we all *know it was* on the morning of August 29th, 1862? And on our side, have we not read General Joseph E. Johnston's "Contribution of materials for the use of the future historian of the war between the States," and has any one risen from the perusal of that interesting book, without the conviction that its distinguished author is mistaken as to some of his statements, or that all contemporaneous history is in error?

I will venture to present only two of the perplexities in which "the future historian of the war between the States" will find himself involved when he comes to compare the "material" contributed by General Johnston with the other "material" contributed by official records and documents, which General Johnston seems not to have seen, or not to have consulted:

General Johnston says—on p. 145 of his "Narrative"—"The authors of Alfried's life of Jefferson Davis, and some other biographies, repre-

sent, to my disparagement, that the army with which General Lee fought in the 'Seven Days' was only that which I had commanded. It is very far from the truth. General Lee did not attack the enemy until the 26th of June, because he was employed from the 1st until then in forming a great army, by bringing to that which I had commanded, *fifteen thousand men from North Carolina*, under Major-General Holmes; *twenty-two thousand men from South Carolina and Georgia*, and *above sixteen thousand men from the 'Valley,' in the divisions of Jackson and Ewell*, which the victories of Cross Keys and Port Republic had rendered disposable."

General Johnston states in a note the sources of his information.

He says "General Holmes told me, in General Lee's presence, just before the fight began on the 31st (of May), that he had that force (15,000 men) ready to join me when the President should give the order." He then refers to other evidence, which he says is in his possession, going to show that the reinforcements brought by General Holmes to General Lee, and which took part in the "Seven Days" battles, amounted to 15,000 men.

As to the 22,000 from South Carolina and Georgia, General Johnston says:

"General Ripley gave in this number. He brought the first brigade, five thousand men. General Lawton told me that his was six thousand; General Drayton that his was seven thousand. There was another brigade, of which I do not know the strength."

Now the "future historian" ought not lightly to doubt the accuracy of any statement of General Johnston, and upon that high authority he would record that before the battles of the "Seven Days," General Lee received *from three* of the sources mentioned by General Johnston, reinforcements to the number of thirty-seven thousand men, who took part in those engagements which resulted in dislodging General McClellan from his position on the Chickahominy.

And yet how hard the "future historian" will be put to it to reconcile "Johnston's narrative" with the official reports made at the time. In the first volume of the official reports of the operations of the Army of Northern Virginia, published by authority of the Confederate Congress, at page 151, will be found General Holmes' statement of the number of men brought by him to take part in the battles around Richmond during the "Seven Days."

General Holmes there says: That upon crossing the James river he was joined on the 30th June by General Wise with two regiments of

seven hundred and fifty-two bayonets and two batteries of artillery, and adds : "The effective force under my orders thus amounted to *six thousand infantry and six batteries of artillery*," being less by nine thousand infantry than General Johnston's "narrative" assigns to General Holmes. General Johnston says that Ripley's brigade was five thousand strong, and that General Ripley so informed him.

There may have been that number of men borne upon the rolls of the brigade, but we have General Ripley's official report of the number of troops under his command that actually took part in the battles around Richmond.

At page 234, volume 1 of the official reports already referred to, General Ripley says :

"The aggregate force which entered into the series of engagements on the 26th of June was *twenty-three hundred and sixty-six*, including pioneers and the ambulance corps."

The "Narrative" puts the force under General Lawton at *six thousand men*, but before the "historian of the war" ventures to make use of this contribution to his materials, he will do well to look at the official reports, at page 270 of the first volume, where he will find that General Lawton gives the force which he carried into the battle of Cold Harbor, on the 27th June, 1862, as *thirty-five hundred men*.

I have not been able to find General Drayton's report of the part taken by his command in the battles around Richmond—if he did take part in them—and therefore cannot compare the number assigned to General Drayton in those engagements by General Johnston's "narrative" with any official documents, but if the reports of Holmes, Lawton and Ripley be correct, they brought less than 11,866 men to participate in those battles, instead of 26,000 as stated by General Johnston.

Ripley and Lawton, according to their reports, had 5,866 men in the "Seven Days" battles, instead of 11,000 according to Johnston's narrative.

It follows, therefore, that Drayton's brigade, and the other, whose strength General Johnston says he does not know, must have made up the rest of the twenty-two thousand men who we are informed came to General Lee from South Carolina and Georgia to aid in driving McClellan from the Chickahominy—that is, those two brigades, Drayton's and the unknown, must have numbered about sixteen thousand men.

General Johnston says that General Drayton told him his brigade was seven thousand strong, so that the unknown brigade must have

numbered nine thousand to make up the twenty-two thousand from South Carolina and Georgia.

It may have been so. There may have been a brigade in General Lee's army nine thousand strong, but in speaking about it before you, I think it safer to refer to it as the "unknown brigade." And in this connection let me suggest to the future historian of the war, that before he writes Drayton's brigade down as contributing seven thousand men to the army around Richmond in the "Seven Days" battles, it will be well for him to inquire whether that brigade joined the army at all until after McClellan had been driven from the Chickahominy, and the army had marched northwards upon a new campaign.

He will find no trace of this brigade in the reports of the Seven Days battle, although they are so much in detail as to include the reports of captains of companies.

A Confederate brigade, seven thousand strong, would probably have taken some part worth reporting, and its name ought to appear in the official account.

Drayton's command will be found mentioned in the official reports of subsequent operations of the army at Manassas and in Maryland.

As to the "unknown brigade," that I think will turn out to be a small command under General Evans, of South Carolina, who did not join the army until after it moved from Richmond.\*

\**Note.*—It is proper to remark that the army around Richmond received a larger reinforcement from North Carolina than the number given in General Holmes' official report.

General Holmes had under his command in North Carolina four brigades, which afterwards came to Virginia, and which are no doubt the troops referred to by General Johnston as comprising the 15,000 men that joined General Lee after the battle of Seven Pines.

These brigades were commanded by General Branch, General Ransom and General J. G. Walker, and a fourth known as the third North Carolina brigade was commanded during its service at Richmond by Col. Junius Daniel.

Of these, Branch's brigade joined the army at Richmond before the battle of Seven Pines. It was engaged with the enemy near Hanover Junction on the 26th May, and afterwards formed part of A. P. Hill's division. General Ransom's brigade consisted of six regiments, one of which, the 48th North Carolina, was transferred to Walker's brigade. Ransom's five regiments numbered about 3,000, though his effective force was somewhat less. It was attached to Huger's division on the 25th June, and is counted in that division.

Walker's brigade, as reported by Colonel Manning, who succeeded General Walker after the latter was disabled on the 1st July, was about four thousand strong, and the third brigade, under Colonel Daniel, was about 1,700, according to the latter officer. (See Reports of Army of Northern Virginia, volume I, p. 322 and

Another instance of the difficulties which surround those who venture to enter upon a detailed history of the war, will be found in the same narrative.

On page 140, General Johnston says :

"About noon (of the 1st June) General Lee was assigned to the command of the Army of Northern Virginia by the President, and at night the troops were ordered by him to return to their camps near Richmond, which they did soon after daybreak Monday" (June 2d).

On the next page General Johnston proceeds to describe the relative

325). These last two commands composed the force mentioned by General Holmes in his report.

General Johnston's statement that fifteen thousand men came from North Carolina, under General Holmes, is therefore calculated to give an erroneous idea of the actual increase of the army under General Lee between the battle of Seven Pines and the battles around Richmond. Branch's brigade should not be included in the troops that came from North Carolina, under Holmes, because that brigade was with the army before General Johnston was wounded, and for the further reason that as it afterwards formed part of A. P. Hill's division, it would be counted twice if it be treated also as part of the troops brought by General Holmes. A similar error would be likely to occur with reference to Ransom's brigade, which is counted as part of Huger's division, and should be excluded from the troops under Holmes.

In fact I have seen an estimate of General Lee's forces in the Seven Days battles, based upon the statement of General Johnston, above referred to, in which General Holmes' command is put down as 15,000 strong, while Ransom's and Branch's brigades are at the same time counted as part of the divisions of Huger and A. P. Hill, thus doubling the strength of those brigades.

It should also be observed in connection with the statement of General Johnston as to the number of troops that came from South Carolina and Georgia, that there is danger of a like error. Among those troops was Lawton's brigade. Now Lawton did not come directly to Richmond from the South.

When he reached Burkeville, on his way to Richmond, General Lee was about to cover the contemplated movement against General McClellan, by creating the impression that Jackson was to be reinforced, so as to resume the offensive in the Valley. For this purpose, Lawton was sent from Burkeville, by way of Lynchburg, to join Jackson near Staunton, and Whiting's division, of two brigades, was detached from the army before Richmond. Both Lawton and Whiting joined Jackson, and formed part of the command with which he came to Richmond and engaged in the Seven Days battle. (See Jackson's Report, volume 1, p. 129, Reports of Army of Northern Virginia, where it will be seen that Lawton was attached to Jackson's division.) This fact should be borne in mind in estimating the strength of General Lee's army, because General Johnston's narrative counts the force under Jackson as composing part of the reinforcements received by General Lee. (See narrative, p. 146.) Lawton must be counted as part of the 22,000, or as part of Jackson's command. Whiting should not be counted among the reinforcements, because he belonged to the army under General Johnston.



forces and positions of the armies that had been engaged on Saturday, and says, with reference to the condition of affairs on Sunday, June 1st:

"After nightfall, Saturday, the two bodies of Federal troops were completely separated from the two corps of their right, beyond the Chickahominy, by the swollen stream which had swept away their bridges, and Sumner's corps, at Fair Oaks, was six miles from those of Heintzelman and Keyes, which was at Bottoms' bridge, but the Confederate forces were united on the front and left-flank of Sumner's corps. Such advantage of position and superiority of numbers would have enabled them to defeat that corps on Sunday morning before any aid could have come from Heintzelman, after which his troops, in the condition to which the action of the day before had rendered them, could not have made effectual resistance." And again, on page 113, General Johnston says:

"No action of the war has been so little understood as that of Seven Pines. The Southern people have felt no interest in it, because, being unfinished in consequence of the disabling of the commander, they saw no advantage derived from it; and the Federal commanders claimed the victory, because the Confederate forces did not renew the battle on Sunday, and fell back to their camps on Monday."

The meaning of these extracts is, that the Confederate army lost a great opportunity to destroy part of that of General McClellan the day after Gen. Johnston was wounded, and that Gen. Lee is responsible for the loss of that opportunity, because he took command about noon on Sunday, and at night ordered the troops back to their camps near Richmond, instead of pressing the advantage they had gained on Saturday, and availing himself of the separation of the Federal forces caused by the flood in the Chickahominy.

Now I believe that General Johnston is the last person in the world to endeavor to magnify his own great merits by depreciating the conduct of others, and especially by depreciating the conduct of one whose name, canonized by death, is treasured by the Southern people in their inmost hearts.

And yet General Johnston has fallen into an error in those parts of his narrative that I have quoted, which is calculated to give the sanction of his great name to a reflection upon the capacity and conduct of the illustrious chief, under whom the army of Northern Virginia won its undying renown.

General Lee was on the battle field on Sunday, June 1st, as he was also the day before; but General Lee did not take actual command of

the army until June 2d, and when he did, the troops were already in the camps around Richmond, whence General Johnston had led them to fight the battle of Seven Pines.

When, unfortunately for the country, General Johnston was wounded, General G. W. Smith succeeded to the command, but was unable to retain it by reason of his feeble health.

The opportunity spoken of by General Johnston was not reported until after the army had returned to its encampment, and could not therefore have been made use of as General Johnston seems to think it should have been.\*

When you see that those who have every desire to tell the truth, and whose opportunities of knowing the facts of which they write are so far superior to my own, have fallen into errors which I am sure they will be the first to correct, you will readily understand why I do not venture to select from all the events which marked the history of the Army of Northern Virginia any one of its great battles as the subject of my address to-night. I have been engaged for two or three years, as some of you may know, in trying to write an account of the life and achievements of the great leader of the army of Northern Virginia, and conscious of my inability to "rise to the height of that great argument," I have spared no labor to make what I may write accurate, however in other respects it may fall below the dignity of the subject.

The Secretary of War saw proper to deny my request (preferred by a distinguished Senator of the United States, who honored me with his confidence and friendship,) to be permitted to examine the captured records of the Confederate Government, of the contents of which, some Federal officers, more fortunate than myself, have from time to time given what the lawyers call "parol testimony."

I have thus been thrown back upon other sources of information, and while I am most grateful for the assistance I have received from officers, both Federal and Confederate, to whom I have applied, candor compels me to acknowledge that the seeker after truth has a hard time of it, when he undertakes to describe with anything like minuteness any of the great battles of the war.

Ever since the surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, I have regarded myself as a man of peace, but I am obliged to admit that on one or two

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\**Note.*—Northern officers do not agree with General Johnston as to the situation of the Federal army on the 1st June, and the existence of the opportunity referred to in the "Narrative" is far from being one of those "materials" upon which the future historian can rely as established beyond dispute.

occasions, in my pursuit of information, I have been tempted to forget my peaceful character, when some zealous Federal officer has insisted upon convincing me that the Confederate army was beaten in the Wilderness, or some unreconstructed rebel has refused to admit that we were repulsed at Gettysburg.

Knowing therefore the difficulties that beset the way of the honest inquirer, I cast the mantle of charity over the errors of those who venture to provide "materials for the use of the future historian of the war between the States," but I shrink from following their example lest I also fall into the same condemnation.

There are, however, some undisputed facts with reference to the war, from the study of which a better understanding of military operations can be derived than from a detailed history of marches and battles, and I propose to invite your attention to one of those interesting and instructive subjects.

I refer to the influence upon the conduct and issue of the war in Virginia, which was exerted by the selection of the city of Richmond as the seat of the Confederate Government, and the establishment here of those depots and arsenals necessary to supply an army operating north of the James river.

It is not possible in fact to explain the operations of the contending armies in Virginia, without a clear understanding of the importance which the possession of Richmond acquired during the progress of the war.

For four years the greatest efforts of the Federal Government were directed to the capture of the city, while the strongest army of the Confederacy was arduously engaged and finally exhausted in its defence.

The political consequence assigned by common consent to the capital of a country, and especially to the capital of a country struggling for recognition, would doubtless have rendered any place which the Confederate Government might have selected for that purpose, a prominent object of attack; but Richmond had a value in a military point of view that far exceeded its political importance.

The great region of country between the James river and the Potomac has become historic. It was the Flanders of the war, and it is no exaggeration to say that nearly or quite a quarter of million of men perished in the fierce struggle for its possession in which the armies of the North and South were engaged for nearly four years.

This territory was of great value to the Confederacy, on account of the supplies it furnished to the army and the recruits whom its brave and patriotic population sent to our ranks.

But it was not the supplies and the recruits which gave it its chief value.

The effectiveness of any army of the Confederacy depended in a great degree upon its proximity to the enemy's country, and it soon became apparent that the same number of Confederate troops could not be placed where they would give occupation to so much of the vastly superior force of the enemy, as in that region between the James and the Potomac, within reach of the sensitive Southern frontier of the United States, on whose extreme border stood the city of Washington, for the safety of which the Federal authorities considered no preparation excessive, no sacrifice too great.

A few considerations will suggest, rather than fully explain, the importance to the Confederacy of being able to maintain in Northern Virginia an army sufficiently strong to keep alive the anxiety of the Washington Government for the safety of the capital and the defence of the avenues of approach to the large cities of Maryland and Pennsylvania.

The resources of the Federal Government greatly exceeded those of the Confederacy.

After the first battle of Manassas, Mr. Lincoln perceived that while the moral effect of treating the war as one waged for the suppression of a rebellion was of service in uniting the different political parties in the North, and in giving the prestige of legitimacy to his government, yet, that in truth, the North, under the name of the "United States," had entered upon a war of conquest, and he forthwith began to prepare for it on a scale adequate to the emergency.

More than half a million of men were called to arms, and a navy was speedily launched, strong enough to perform the great task committed to it of blockading the Southern coast, from the Capes of Virginia to the mouth of the Rio Grande, and ultimately to turn the doubtful scale in favor of the baffled armies of the Union.

The results of this vigorous policy were soon manifested.

Vast armies gathered along our frontier, nimble gun-boats and powerful iron-clads swarmed in our rivers and along our coasts, and every part of the South felt itself exposed to invasion.

It was manifestly impossible for the Confederate Government to attempt, with any hope of success, to oppose this vast force at every point that might be assailed.

The undisputed control of the water, and the extensive coasts and great navigable rivers of the South, enabled the Federal Government

to threaten so many points at once, that to oppose the enemy everywhere would require a ruinous dispersion of the Confederate forces. The fatal consequences of such an attempt had been demonstrated as soon as military operations were resumed in the beginning of 1862.

Kentucky and a great part of Tennessee were quickly overrun; Missouri was practically lost; the unfortunate city of New Orleans fell into the hands of the enemy; General Johnston found himself obliged to retire from Northern Virginia, and strong expeditions of the enemy succeeded in establishing themselves along our Atlantic coast. The Confederates had some troops everywhere, but not enough anywhere.

But although they had to abandon the plan of opposing the enemy successfully at every point of attack, it was still possible, by concentrating their forces upon some vulnerable part of the Federal frontier, to compel the enemy to pursue the same policy of concentration, and thus impair his means of assailing exposed localities which the Confederacy did not possess the power to defend.

The position of the city of Washington, and the paramount importance attached by Mr. Lincoln and his advisers to its safety, afforded such an opportunity to the Confederate commander. The safety of the Federal capital was regarded by the authorities at Washington as essential to a successful prosecution of the war, and the precautions taken for its defence were always in proportion to their estimate of its importance, rather than the actual danger of losing it. The presence of General Johnston's army at Manassas detained that of General McClellan, nearly three times as strong, at Washington during the autumn and winter of 1861-'62. The advance of the small force of Jackson down the Valley, when he drove General Banks across the Potomac, at a time when the Federal armies were nearly everywhere successful, excited such apprehensions for the city of Washington that the strong army of McDowell was recalled from Fredericksburg to oppose him, and General McClellan was deprived of its co-operation in his intended attack on Richmond.

These results were so entirely out of proportion to the actual danger to which at any time Washington was exposed, as naturally to suggest the idea that by availing ourselves of the extreme sensitiveness of the Federal authorities on the subject, we could compel the concentration of their forces, and cause them to abandon some parts of our country which we were not strong enough to protect.

This will be found to be a marked feature of the operations of the Army of Northern Virginia, under the command of General Lee.

It will be remembered that he resorted to this plan to compel the army of General McClellan to withdraw from the James after it had been dislodged from its position on the Chickahominy. He did not hesitate, notwithstanding the declaration by General McClellan of his intention to renew his operations against Richmond from his new base, to detach the whole of Jackson's command, which was speedily followed by the strong division of A. P. Hill.

These troops, under the energetic lead of Jackson, crossed the Rapidan, and attacked the army of General Pope with a boldness which caused him to conceive a very exaggerated idea of their numbers.

Pope's advance was checked, and the troops of General Burnside, which had been recalled to assist McClellan, were brought to Fredericksburg, to co-operate with Pope in resisting the advance of the Confederate army. This movement of Burnside made it evident that nothing would be undertaken by McClellan, and General Lee immediately began to move the last of his army northward, confident that he would thereby accelerate the recall of McClellan from the James.

At the same time the troops of D. H. Hill, which had been stationed south of James river, were drawn to Richmond, with such reinforcements as the withdrawal of General Burnside from North Carolina had made disposable, with orders to follow the main body of the army northward as soon as General McClellan should be recalled.

Thus was completed that great step towards the concentration of the Confederate forces which resulted in the formation of the powerful Army of Northern Virginia.

It is worthy of notice that the army did not receive its name until after it had returned from Northern Virginia and was engaged in defending Richmond. The name seems to have been inspired by the conviction that Northern Virginia was destined to be the scene of its operations.

This concentration on our part, and the danger with which Washington was supposed to be menaced, brought about the results anticipated by General Lee.

McClellan's army was brought to reinforce Pope; troops were taken from the coast of Carolina and from Western Virginia to aid in defending the Federal capital, and it became evident that a Confederate army could not render more efficient service and afford more complete protection to the country than by arousing the apprehensions of the authorities at Washington for the safety of that city.

The advantage which the Confederacy derived from its ability to

maintain a strong army near the Northern and Northeastern border of Virginia, will also appear if we reflect what would have been the condition of affairs had the Confederate army retired from that region and fallen back towards the North Carolina line, as it must have done in order to keep up its connections with the South.

It is evident that in that case the whole Southern border of the United States, including the city of Washington, would have been relieved of serious apprehension, and the troops occupied in providing against an expected invasion on our part would have been disposable for aggressive movements against us.

The effect of the loss of Kentucky and the greater part of Tennessee upon military operations in the West, will further illustrate my meaning.

After our troops in the West had fallen back so far from the Northern border as to interpose between them and the States beyond the Ohio river an extensive district of country, practically in the possession of the enemy, the Federal Government had a much greater force at its command for use in the field than would have been the case had it been required to guard its long Southern border.

Time will not permit me to point out all the advantages resulting from the tenure of Northern Virginia by the Confederacy, but I have said enough to indicate to my thoughtful hearers that the great struggle of nearly four years, which was waged for the possession of this region, involved consequences to the Confederacy of far greater importance than the mere loss of territory, or of the recruits and supplies it derived from Northern Virginia.

But while the presence of our army in Northern Virginia was of advantage in many ways, some of which I have suggested, it is apparent that to enable that army to accomplish its object, it needed all the strength the Confederacy could give it.

It was near the Northern border, in the presence continually of the most powerful of all the Union armies, and constantly exposed to the attack of superior numbers.

With all the important consequences which depended upon the ability of that army to maintain itself, and in view of the gigantic task imposed upon it of meeting the repeated efforts of the enemy to force it further back from the Union frontier, and from the Federal capital, it would seem that the army had as much as it could do, and that the skill of its leader and the courage of his men would be fully occupied in performing the arduous task immediately before them.

You will now understand the subject to which I propose to invite your attention—that is, the influence which the situation and military importance of the city of Richmond exerted upon the conduct and issue of the war.

Valuable as Northern Virginia was to the Confederacy, its possession came to depend entirely upon our ability to defend the city of Richmond. Here were established the depots and arsenals of the army operating in Northern Virginia, or through Richmond it had the chief means of access to sources of supply further South.

With Richmond in the hands of the enemy, it is evident that no large Confederate army could have been maintained in Northern Virginia.

There was no other city in Virginia that had railroad connections with the South sufficient to furnish transportation for the supply of such an army as it was important to maintain in Northern Virginia.

Lynchburg might have been connected with the railroads in North Carolina, and thus have had an interior line of communication with the South less accessible to the enemy than any that Richmond possessed, but no such communication was made, nor does it profit now to inquire whether it could have been made.

If I have succeeded in impressing you with a sense of the importance of Northern Virginia to the prosperous maintenance of the war on the part of the Confederacy, you cannot fail to perceive that in addition to the great task which devolved upon that army in the immediate field of its operations, it had also to assume all the difficulties which the situation of Richmond imposed upon those who undertook to defend it.

Early in the second year of the war, the Confederacy was compelled to yield to the enemy quiet possession of the James river to within a few miles of Richmond. From that time it was always possible for the Federal Government to transport troops from the North and land them within less than a day's march of the city, without the fear or even the possibility of interruption by us.

It is unnecessary to refer to the additional facilities of approach to Richmond which the York river afforded to the enemy. The place upon the safety of which so much depended was in fact almost as accessible from the North by water as the city of Alexandria. Its distance from the base of a Federal army operating against it gave it no advantage if that army could almost reach its gates by a safe and rapid water transportation.

In attacking the city, situated as it was, the powerful flotilla of the



enemy was able to co-operate efficiently with his land forces, so that the defenders of Richmond had to resist the combined efforts of the Federal army and navy. Nor did Richmond, for purposes of defence, possess any of the advantages of an inland town, even should the enemy, renouncing the facilities which his command of the water afforded him, attempt to approach the city by land.

The movement of General Grant in 1864 from Culpeper Courthouse to the James river, illustrates clearly the disadvantages which the army defending Richmond was forced to incur, owing to the peculiar situation of the city.

General Grant marched from Culpeper Courthouse, abandoning his communications with Washington by the Orange and Alexandria road. But he had no need to care for his old communications, as his first halt in the Wilderness, and his next at Spotsylvania Courthouse, afforded him an easy and safe access to the Potomac river at Aquia Creek, within a few hours rail of Washington, by a road directly in the rear of and covered by his army. As General Grant advanced further South from Spotsylvania Courthouse to the Annas, the Rappahannock below Fredericksburg gave him new water communications with his base, using Port Royal in the rear of his army as a landing. When his third stage brought him to the Pamunkey, another and perfectly safe communication was opened with Washington by the York river and the Chesapeake Bay, and when his last march brought him to the James, his communication with Washington and all the Northern ports became safe and perfect, without requiring the detachment of a single man from his army to guard it.

It will thus be seen that although General Grant's march was through Virginia, it was attended with few of the difficulties that beset such a movement in a hostile country.

The Federal army was not troubled with the protection of its lines of communication, for it abandoned one only to find another and a safer at the end of every march.

Deprived thus of the opportunities that such a movement usually affords those who resist an army seeking to penetrate the interior of a country, the army of General Lee could only oppose direct resistance to the progress of the enemy, and hence the bloody contests between the few and the many that strewed the road from the Rapidan to the James with thousands of dead and wounded.

But while Richmond could thus be easily approached by water, and while it had none of the advantages of an interior position, even as

against an advance of the enemy by land, the difficulty of defending it, in case a Federal army too strong to be dislodged should succeed in establishing itself near the city, was insuperable. Such a state of affairs would reverse all the conditions of a successful resistance to a strong by a weaker force.

It would impose upon the smaller army the protection of long lines of railroad, without which neither the troops nor the population could be supplied, while its stronger adversary would be perfectly safe in its communications, and free to use every man for the purpose of attack.

But it is unnecessary for me to point out to those who took part in the defence of Richmond the manifold and fatal disadvantages they struggled so bravely to overcome.

I have said enough to show the difficulties that beset that defence, and yet all these difficulties were added to the duties, cares and labors of the Army of Northern Virginia.

I have only time to refer to one or two illustrations of the disadvantages which the defence of Richmond, added to its other great labors, imposed upon the army—disadvantages proceeding altogether from the exposed situation of the city, and the absolute naval supremacy of the enemy.

It is plain that the necessity of looking to the defence of the city against the great peril to which it was constantly exposed could not fail to influence and control the operations of the army.

You will remember how, in the winter of 1862-63, the fear of an advance of the enemy on the South side of the James caused the detachment from the army at Fredericksburg of the greater part of Longstreet's corps, and the apprehension of danger to Richmond from that direction was so great, that it was not considered expedient to return these troops to the army, even for the purpose of taking part in the battle of Chancellorsville. Their absence exposed the army of General Lee to the greatest peril, and perhaps stripped the victory of Chancellorsville of the fruits it might have borne.

Again you will remember, that the presence of a Federal fleet in the James, and the movement of a Federal army from Bermuda Hundreds, detained from us one of the strongest divisions of Longstreet's corps, while we were grappling with our gigantic enemy in the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania Courthouse.

The same necessity prevented us from calling to our assistance the other troops under General Beauregard on the South side of the James, with whose aid we might once more have rolled the tide of war back

to our Northern border, and made the result of the enemy's campaign of 1864 like that of 1862 and of 1863.

But the most marked influence which the situation of Richmond, and the necessity of providing for its defence, exerted upon the conduct of the war in Virginia, is seen in its connection with the expeditions of the army beyond the Potomac.

This I shall endeavor briefly to explain. The great advantages which the enemy would have in besieging Richmond, were so apparent, that it was a saying of the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia, that Richmond was never so safe as when its defenders were absent.

His meaning was, that the safety of Richmond depended upon our ability to employ the enemy at a distance, and prevent his near approach to the city. Such was the policy adopted by him, and which secured the comparative safety of Richmond from the time the army moved Northward in 1862, to the time when worn out with more than two years of exhausting war, it was forced to retire within the entrenchments of Richmond before the great and ever increasing multitudes of its adversary.

But it was only by acting upon the apprehensions of the enemy that such a result could be attained with the force under General Lee's command.

Accordingly when by the second battle of Manassas he had driven the united forces of Pope and McClellan, with all the reinforcements that had been added to them, back upon the defences of Washington, it became necessary for General Lee to decide how he could prevent them from sending an expedition by water against Richmond, and thus necessitate the withdrawal of the army from Northern Virginia to defend the city. To have done this would have been practically to give up the advantages we had gained in the campaign from Richmond to Manassas.

It was out of the question to attempt to besiege the Federal army in the defences of Washington South of the Potomac, even had General Lee been provided with the means to do so, nor could those works have been taken would any advantage have resulted at all commensurate with the sacrifice of life that would have attended the effort, as the army would still have been separated from Washington by a river crossed by a high bridge more than a mile long, and commanded by the enemy's gunboats.

Nor was it possible for the army to remain near its late battle fields,

as the country around was entirely stripped of supplies, and there was no railroad to Richmond except from the Rapidan.

To have fallen back Southward far enough to open railroad communication with Richmond, besides sacrificing to a great extent the moral effect of the Confederate successes, might have invited a renewal of the attempt on the city by way of the James river.

Under these circumstances, there was but one course left for him to pursue, if he would save Richmond from the peril which he knew would attend its investment by the large army of the enemy. He must give occupation to that army, and such occupation as would compel the largest concentration of its forces. By this means he might even induce the enemy to withdraw troops from other parts of the Confederacy, and thus obtain additional reinforcements for himself.

These results, however, required that he should continue to threaten Washington and the Northern States, and this he could not do effectually unless he could put his army near Washington, and at the same time where it could be supported. It was for these reasons, as we learn from the report of General Lee's first invasion of Maryland, that he crossed the Potomac, and for like reasons, as it would be easy to show, he invaded Maryland and Pennsylvania in 1863.

It is not my intention to trace the campaigns of the army beyond the Potomac, interesting and imperfectly understood as the events of those campaigns are, but I have accomplished my present purpose if I have succeeded in explaining that the situation of Richmond was intimately connected with the designs of General Lee in undertaking those expeditions, and that the battles of Sharpsburg and Gettysburg were, in fact, but a part of the plan by which General Lee sought to defend Richmond, and thereby maintain his army in Northern Virginia, and in proximity to the enemy's border.

It would, perhaps, be going too far to say that General Lee would not have crossed the Potomac but for the peculiar situation and vital importance of Richmond.

It is not impossible that had the objective point of Federal operations in Virginia been some less exposed and less accessible place, the Confederate army might have gained advantages that would have enabled it to assume the offensive in fact as well as in appearance. But it is more probable that in such an event, the Confederate Government would have availed itself of the opportunity to reinforce its armies in the South and West rather than engage in the invasion of the North. That it had the inclination to pursue this policy, is demonstrated by

the detachment of two divisions of Longstreet's corps to reinforce General Bragg, at a time when it was thought that General Lee would not require his whole force in Virginia. In fact, I may mention, that while an army lay on the Rapidan in the winter of 1863 and 1864, it was at one time in contemplation to send General Lee himself to take command of the army in Georgia. The confidence of General Lee in the belief that Richmond could not be successfully defended except by keeping the enemy at a distance, was illustrated to the last.

The close of three years of bloody war found his diminished forces struggling with fresh and ever increasing numbers, and yet so strong was General Lee's conviction of the necessity of preventing the enemy from forming the siege of Richmond, that he did not hesitate to reduce his strength still further, in order to aim one last blow at the Federal capitol, in the hope that he might thus cause General Grant to send part of his army to its defence.

Such was the object of General Early's expedition to Maryland.

It was not supposed that General Early's small force would cause the withdrawal of General Grant's army, but it was hoped that the latter would be induced to detach a part of his force, and in that event reinforcements could have been sent to General Early, until at last the scene of hostilities might once more have been transferred from Richmond to the Northern frontier, and one more expensive campaign of the enemy have been frustrated.

But the vast superiority of the enemy in numbers enabled him to provide for the defence of Washington without seriously diminishing the army of General Grant, and the siege of Richmond remained unbroken.

I have thus imperfectly endeavored to present to you, in a general way, the difficulties under which the Army of Northern Virginia had to struggle, and I think, if I have made myself understood, that you will be able to form a better idea of the extent and magnitude of its services than could be derived from a description of its various battles, the most accurate comparison of its strength with that of the enemy, or the most careful enumeration of the losses it sustained or inflicted.

With the burden of Richmond's weakness constantly resting upon one arm, with the other it dealt those ponderous blows under which the gigantic power of the Federal Government shook to its foundation.

These are reflections which add new interest to the recollection of our battles and our marches. They give unity and consistency to a narrative that is commonly regarded as made up of detached and independent events.

But time will not permit me to pursue the subject further now, nor do I believe that when we meet, as on this occasion, to revive the recollections and associations of our army life, you give your first thoughts to battles and campaigns. Such names as Cold Harbor, Manassas, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and imperishable Petersburg, recall proud memories I know.

But your thoughts, my comrades, when you hear those names, recur first to the dear friends who lay by your side in the bivouac of the night, and were struck dead by your side in the battle of the morrow.

You cease to think of the stirring events of the combat when you recall the scenes after the battle, when—

“Our bugles sang truce, and the night clouds had lowered,  
And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky,  
And thousands had sunk to the ground overpowered,  
The weary to sleep, and the wounded to die.”

You remember how you sat by some comrade whose life blood was fast ebbing, and received from lips, soon to be sealed in death, the last fond words to mother, wife, child, friend. You recall a son kneeling over the prostrate body of his father, or a father, leaning on his musket, and gazing with mingled agony and pride upon a brave young face, white in death, his hope, his treasure, dead—yes, but dead on the field of duty and honor—dead in honor’s foremost ranks.

These are the memories which the survivors of the army cherish nearest their hearts, and with which they go back to their battle fields, not as to the scenes of triumph or of disaster, but as to holy ground on which brave comrades fell—ground on which they tread with veiled eyes and unsandelled feet.

It was not our fortune to reap the fruits of successful war.

It was not ours, coming back to our homes, to hear from those for whom our arms had won liberty and safety, the grateful welcome:—

“O! day thrice lovely! when at length the soldier  
Returns home into life; when he becomes  
A fellow-man among his fellow-men.  
The colors are unfur’d, the cavalcade  
Marshals, and now the buzz is hushed, and, hark!  
Now the soft peace march beats, home, brothers, home.”

But as I look back over the whole history of the Army of Northern Virginia, from its birth, through its life of arduous toil and danger, to the hour when its unstained sword dropped from its exhausted hand, I feel that it is worthy to have applied to it the noble words addressed by the English poet to the fallen oak:—

"Thou who unmoved, hast heard the whirlwind chide,  
 Full many a winter round thy craggy bed,  
 And like an earth-born giant hast outspread  
 Thy hundred arms and Heaven's own bolts defied,  
 Now liest along thy native mountain side  
 Uptorn ! Yet deem not that I come to shed  
 The idle drops of pity o'er thy head,  
 Or basely to insult thy blasted pride.  
 No ! still 'tis thine, though fallen, Imperial Oak,  
 To teach this lesson to the wise and brave,  
 That 'tis far better, overthrown and broke,  
 In Freedom's cause to sink into the grave,  
 Than in submission to a Tyrant's yoke,  
 Like the vile reed, to bow and be a slave."















